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THE ANTECEDENTS OF THE COMMISSION'S REPORT

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I have been asked to write an account of the movement which culminated in the establishment of the Commission on College Entrance Requirements in Latin, whose report is printed in this number of the *Journal*. It might be supposed that to do this would involve a history of human thought, or at least of secondary education in America. As a matter of fact, however, the movement had a deliberate beginning and has advanced by conscious stages to a definite end. It should be said, in the first place, that a reduction in college-entrance requirements was not this end. About this there has been some confusion, and those unacquainted with the facts have even supposed Mr. Wilson Farrand to be an apostle of the reform of the Latin requirements. Now, what Mr. Farrand is concerned about is a reduction in the aggregate amount of the requirements in all subjects.¹ He believes that students would be better prepared for college if less were required. It is true that he advocates the limitation of the examinations in Latin composition, so called, to "exercises designed to illustrate commonly used grammatical principles," and here surely most teachers of Latin will agree with him. Perhaps one may believe, too, that if fewer subjects were required by the colleges, the schools would give Latin the time which the subject deserves and needs. Finally, the demand that the examinations in Latin be made qualitative rather than quantitative is entirely in accord with Mr. Farrand's general contention. Granting all this, it is still necessary to insist that the agitation for reduction in the amount of the prescribed reading in Latin has had no connection with the agitation for a reduction in the entrance requirements. The commission and those who prepared the way for its creation stand, not for less Latin in the schools and smaller entrance requirements in Latin,

¹ See his article in the *Educational Review* for January, 1906, and his paper in the *Report of the New England Association of Colleges and Preparatory Schools* for 1907.

but for broader examinations that shall call for sounder methods of preparation and larger results.

In an address before the New York Latin Club,¹ February 27, 1904, Professor Nelson G. McCrea, of Columbia University, cited the results of the examinations held by the College Entrance Examination Board as proof that all was not well with Latin, and declared his conviction that there was "a partially erroneous conception of the proper function of an entrance examination in Latin." What he called his cardinal proposition embodies a truth too often disregarded by teachers and examiners. It is this: "The function of the preparatory teaching of Latin is wholly linguistic, not culture-historical." I cannot now follow Professor McCrea through all the steps of his argument, nor is it necessary, since our immediate interest is with his proposal for a revision of entrance requirements. On this point also I will quote his exact words:

We must revise our present entrance requirement, not because it sets too high a standard, but because, by the terms in which it is formulated, the weight of emphasis is made to fall on precisely the wrong thing, on the prescribed work. Let us read no less, perhaps more, than at present, but let us prescribe only three orations of Cicero instead of six, and instead of six books of Vergil, three only. This amount should be handled minutely, from the standpoint of language alone, in every possible aspect, from the observation of the mere forms of words up to the study of the rhetorical effectiveness of the phrasing.

Later, in 1906, at the Classical Conference in Philadelphia, Professor McCrea said² that he was now inclined to favor the prescription of only one oration of Cicero and one book of Vergil, throwing the stress in the examination for admission to college upon sight-translation.

In the meantime the present writer had treated the whole subject of the Latin requirements³ in the Classics Conference at the Asbury Park meeting of the National Education Association in 1905. Two things were especially emphasized: "The choice of authors and the choice between different parts of the works of each, together with the order in which they are to be read, should be left largely or wholly to the schools;" and "The test that will most surely discover the candi-

¹ Printed in the *Educational Review* for June, 1904.

² See the *Latin Leaflet* of March 11, 1907.

³ See the *School Review* for December, 1905.

date's preparedness or unpreparedness for college and at the same time do least violence to the ideals of the schools is the sight-examination." I would not have it supposed that I think there was anything novel in these theses or in the arguments with which I supported them. Doubtless the question of the prescription of reading has been debated, in some form, from time immemorial; and my own memory does not go back to a time when examinations in translation at sight were not used in one section of this country and were not prevalent in other countries. There was now, however, a strong feeling that the diversity of the Latin requirements of different colleges needlessly complicated and demoralized the work of the great preparatory schools, and this feeling gave greater significance and general interest to any suggestion looking to changed conditions.

So far there had been nothing but talk. The step which I had in mind in speaking of the deliberate beginning of the movement was taken by Mr. Charles S. Knox, of St. Paul's School, Concord, N. H., who kept urging that it was necessary to act, if the suggestions were to accomplish anything. Finally he asked me to join him in drawing up a resolution, which he offered, in 1907, at the annual meetings of the Conference of Masters of Church Schools, the New England Association of Colleges and Preparatory Schools, and the Classical Association of New Hampshire. This resolution ran thus:

WHEREAS, The lack of uniformity in the college-entrance examinations in Latin lays an unnecessary burden upon the schools, by compelling the division of classes and increased labor of teachers, with a confusion that is wasteful and ineffective, and

WHEREAS, The large amount of prescribed literature upon which candidates for college must be prepared hampers the freedom of the schools in choice of authors, works, and time of reading, and prevents the development of courses of study suited to their individual needs,

Resolved, That this Association petition the universities and colleges of America, first, to come to some agreement upon uniform requirements for the college-entrance examinations in Latin, expressed in the same terms; and, second, to prescribe much smaller portions of the literature as basis of the set, or prescribed, examinations than are now required by some of our universities, testing the power to read the language by simple examinations at sight, and thus leaving to the schools the choice of the major part of the reading to be done by their students.

The Conference of Masters of Church Schools referred the resolution to a committee composed of the head-masters of Groton School

and St. Mark's School and the rector of St. Paul's School (Dr. Endicott Peabody, Dr. William G. Thayer, Dr. Henry Ferguson), who in the following March addressed a letter to the officers of the Classical Association of New England, indorsing the substance of the resolution and expressing their sense of the urgent importance of greater uniformity in Latin requirements to schools preparing for several colleges. The New England Association of Colleges and Preparatory Schools referred the resolution to a large and representative committee which had been constituted to consider Mr. Farrand's proposals. This committee made an interim report in 1908, in which it declared its sympathy with Mr. Knox's resolution. The committee is still engaged in the consideration of the whole field of entrance requirements; it is expected that it will approve the definitions of Latin requirements framed by the commission and recommend their acceptance by the New England colleges. The Classical Association of New Hampshire adopted Mr. Knox's resolution, and appointed the mover, with Professor Frank Gardner Moore, then of Dartmouth College, and John C. Kirtland to bring the matter before the Classical Association of New England.

At the meeting of the American Philological Association at Chicago in 1907 the following resolution was adopted, on the motion of Professor M. S. Slaughter, of the University of Wisconsin:

WHEREAS, In at least one section of the country a movement has been set on foot to promote uniformity in the classical requirements for entrance to college;

Resolved, That the American Philological Association express its sympathetic interest in the effort to bring about so desirable a result, and that it lend all aid in its power to secure the establishment of uniform college entrance requirements in the classics, (a) expressed in identical terms; (b) providing variety by announcement of the texts prescribed for the next four or five years severally, if practicable; (c) securing greater freedom for the schools by increased emphasis upon translation at sight.

At its first meeting, March 9, 1908, the Eastern Massachusetts Classical Association adopted by unanimous vote a resolution offered by Mr. George H. Browne, of the Browne and Nichols School, Cambridge, pledging support to the Classical Association of New Hampshire in its efforts to secure action by the parent organization. Professor Frank Gardner Moore presented the subject to the Classical Association of New England at its meeting the next month, and it

was voted unanimously to "request the American Philological Association to appoint a commission to formulate classical entrance requirements in accordance with the resolution adopted by that Association at its last annual meeting, held in Chicago, December, 1907." The Classical Association of the Middle States and Maryland (now called the Classical Association of the Atlantic States) and the Classical Association of the Middle West and South were invited to join in this petition, and Professor Frank E. Woodruff, of Bowdoin College, Professor H. de F. Smith, of Amherst College, and John C. Kirtland were appointed to execute the plan.

Believing that it could undertake its task with better hope of success if the discussion should be centered upon one language at a time, the committee naturally chose to begin with Latin, inasmuch as the Greek requirements affect a much smaller number of students and are less diversified. It communicated the invitation of the Association of New England to the two sister Associations, and both promptly took favorable action. The Association of the Middle West and South appointed Professor William Gardner Hale, of the University of Chicago, Mr. Maynard M. Hart, of the William McKinley High School, St. Louis, and Dr. J. J. Schlicher, of the State Normal School, Terre Haute, Ind., to co-operate in the movement, instructing them "to favor the general policy of seeking the establishment of uniformity of college-entrance requirements in the classics expressed in identical terms," but not to commit themselves to sections (b) and (c) of the resolution adopted by the American Philological Association (see p. 150). The Association of the Middle States and Maryland adopted, with but a single dissenting vote, the following resolutions, presented by Professor Charles Knapp, of Columbia University, and Professor Thomas Fitz-Hugh, of the University of Virginia:

Resolved, That the Classical Association of the Middle States and Maryland heartily indorse the resolutions transmitted to the Association from the Classical Association of New England.

Resolved, That in the opinion of the Classical Association of the Middle States and Maryland the most effective method of furthering the spirit of the resolutions transmitted to this Association by the Classical Association of New England would be the adoption of the following specific plan of entrance examinations:

1. The requirements for admission to college in Latin shall be:

- a) a thorough knowledge of the forms and inflections of Latin;
 - b) a thorough knowledge of the chief principles of Latin syntax;
 - c) a thorough knowledge of a vocabulary of 2,000 Latin words and their English equivalents;
 - d) the ability to scan the Latin hexameter.
2. The primary intent of entrance examinations in Latin shall be to test the candidate's knowledge of Latin and his ability to make use of that knowledge. To that end the entrance examinations in Latin shall be divided into four parts:
- a) Prose composition (Latin writing in prose). This examination shall be in two parts: the first part shall consist of detached sentences requiring knowledge of Latin forms and exemplifying the principles of Latin syntax; the second of a short passage of easy narrative, designed to test the ability of the candidate to write Latin consecutively.
 - b) A short passage of moderate difficulty from some Latin prose author, to be translated and explained at sight.
 - c) A short passage of moderate difficulty from some Latin poet, to be translated and explained at sight.
 - d) A special examination on a particular prescribed portion of Latin literature, of limited extent (1,500 lines, more or less, prose or verse), e. g., *De bello Gallico* vii, *Aeneid* iv or vi.

In all sight-examinations the meanings of Latin words in the passages set not contained in the select list of 2,000 Latin words, or of the English words in the passages set for translation into Latin not readily translatable by the Latin words in the select list of 2,000 Latin words, shall be given in footnotes on the examination paper; the candidate will therefore be expected to translate with substantial accuracy and into good English, and no allowance will be made for ignorance of the meanings of words or for slovenly English.

Professor McCrea had four years earlier, in 1904, recommended the use of a list of selected Latin words, the learning of which should be considered an essential part of the preparation for college. Doubtless he had in mind Professor Lodge's projected *Vocabulary of High School Latin*, the appearance of which, in 1907, gave impetus and direction to the sentiment that schools and examiners should reach some agreement as to what Latin words a candidate for admission to college might fairly be expected to know. The proposal to make a fixed vocabulary one of the entrance requirements was advocated by Professor Harry Thurston Peck in the *Educational Review* for April, 1908, and by Professor Knapp in the *School Review* for October, 1908, and in the *Educational Review* for November, 1908. It was attacked by Mr. George H. Browne (himself the compiler of a *Latin Word-List*) in the *School Review* for January, 1909, and by

Dr. John Tetlow in a paper read before the Eastern Massachusetts Classical Association last winter and printed in the *Classical Journal* for November, 1909. The Council of Ancient Languages of the High and Latin Schools of Boston in December, 1908, approved, with some slight modifications, the plan proposed by the Association of the Middle States and Maryland. "It was the unanimous opinion of the Council that questions of syntax should not be given on words in the sight passages, and that a paper very difficult in itself was not so fair a test as a paper of moderate difficulty strictly marked."

The College Entrance Examination Board recognized the reasonableness of the demand for greater uniformity in Latin requirements in a vote passed in November, 1908, referring the question of the revision of the board's definitions of the requirements to its Committee of Review. In March, 1909, the Committee of Review decided that it would be unwise to set two plans on foot, and postponed consideration of the matter until the commission should have had time to act. The committee voted at the same time to express to the commission "its sense of the desirability of uniform requirements in Latin and of a reduction in the number of examinations."

The report of the commission brings the account of the movement down to date, but there is room for a word of explanation regarding the constitution of the commission. The Classical Association of New England asked that both colleges and schools should be represented, and the Classical Association of the Middle West and South that the commission should represent the three classical associations. One of these was given a larger representation than the others in view of the greater extent of its territory and its larger membership. My references to articles on the subject of the reform will be complete, I believe, if I mention that of Dr. DeForest in the September *Educational Review* ("College Requirements in Latin and the School Curriculum").

This minute and solemn history may seem ridiculously out of proportion to the importance of the events narrated. I can only say, by way of excuse, that these events constitute the warrant for the commission's action, and that the records have been brought together here for the sake of their cumulative force. It is no part of my present purpose to discuss the recommendations of the commission. I would

only call attention, in conclusion, to the fact that the new definitions of the requirements satisfy the two chief demands of the reformers. They offer to the schools a large measure of freedom in the choice of reading, and they establish a form of examination that should invite correct methods of teaching. Absolute uniformity might have been advanced by a more complete and precise statement of certain particulars, but regarding these there were differences of opinion not easily reconciled, and the commission felt that any uniformity was unattainable unless it could go to the colleges with a united front. The continuance of the commission offers promise of ultimate agreement in the minor matters left inchoate in this first report. I see no reason why the proposed definitions should not be used by the colleges in the meantime, without the slightest subtraction and with only such additions as accord with the commission's clear intention to leave certain questions of detail for the determination of the individual institutions. There is surely no longer any need to present the arguments for uniformity in the Latin requirements, and practical uniformity can now be reached by the adoption of these definitions, upon which representatives of colleges and schools in all parts of the country have agreed.